

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CPR-01 SSC-01 EURE-00 COME-00  
EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /068 W  
-----151928Z 052175 /50

O 151735Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 661  
INFO: RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 2088  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS  
USMISSION NATO  
USMISSION OECD PARIS  
AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LONDON 2681

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINT, UK  
SUBJ: CROSLAND'S CONDITION DETERIORATING: A REPLACE-  
MENT EXPECTED

REF LONDON 2576

SUMMARY. CROSLAND'S CONDITION REMAINS CRITICAL (REFTEL),  
AND IT IS CONSIDERED UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL RETURN TO  
ACTIVE POLITICAL LIFE. LARGELY BECAUSE OF BRITAIN'S  
CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE EC COUNCIL OF MINISTERDUCALLAGHAN IS  
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EXPECTED TO MOVE WITH DISPATCH IN NAMING A NEW FOREIGN  
SECRETARY. CHANCELLOR HEALEY APPEARS TO BE THE MOST  
PROBABLE SUCCESSOR, BUT SHIRLEY WILLIAMS, PETER SHORE AND  
MERLYN REES HAVE ALSO BEEN MENTIONED IN MEDIA SPECULATION.  
CROSLAND'S ILLNESS COULD HARDLY HAVE COME AT A WORSE TIME  
FROM CALLAGHAN'S STANDPOINT. NOT ONLY IS THE UK IN THE  
CHAIR AT THE EC, BUT CROSLAND'S PUTATIVE SUCCESSOR,

HEALEY, IS DEEPLY ENGAGED IN PREPARING THE BUDGET AND NEGOTIATING THE CRITICAL THIRD ROUND OF PAY RESTRAINTS WITH THE UNIONS. FURTHERMORE, THE GOVERNMENT'S TENOUS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT HANGS ON A SINGLE SEAT. ALL OF THE CHOICES FACING CALLAGHAN ARE TOUGH, AND AS YET WE HAVE FEW CLUES AS TO WHICH WAY HE WILL MOVE. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESMAN FEBRUARY 15 REPORTED THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY CROSLAND'S CONDITION HAD DETERIORATED AND WAS "DANGEROUS".

2. THE MEDIA ARE SPECULATING EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF CROSLAND'S ILLNESS. THE CONSENSUS IS THAT EVEN IF CROSLAND SHOULD RECOVER, HIS ACTIVE POLITICAL LIFE HAS COME TO AN END. WE BELIEVE THIS ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT. NORMALLY, CROSLAND'S DEPUTY, MINISTER OF STATE DAVID OWEN, WOULD BE EXPECTED TO ACT AS FONSEC FOR A DECENT INTERVAL BEFORE A REPLACEMENT WERE NAMED. THE UNUSUALLY HIGH LEVEL OF CURRENT FCO ACTIVITY, AND ESPECIALLY BRITAIN'S ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, MEANS THAT THE "NORMAL" SCENARIO IS NEITHER DESIRABLE NOR WORKABLE. ANOTHER OPTION WOULD BE FOR CALLAGHAN TO ASSUME THE FCO PORTFOLIO, BUT THIS SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY DUE TO THE MANY OTHER DEMANDS ON HIS TIME AND THE AMOUNT OF WORK ENTAILED IN THE EC CHAIRMANSHIP.

3. FINDING A SUCCESSOR FOR CROSLAND WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. IN SEVERAL RESPECTS HIS ILLNESS COULD HARDLY

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HAVE COME AT A WORSE TIME FOR CALLAGHAN. THE NEXT FONSEC WILL HAVE TO TAKE ON THE COUNCIL'S CHAIRMANSHIP IN MID-STREAM AND DO AN EXTREMELY QUICK STUDY OF OTHER PROBLEMS SUCH AS SOUTHERN AFRICA. MOREOVER, THE LOGICAL CANDIDATE, CHANCELLOR DENIS HEALEY, IS HEAVILY ENGAGED IN PREPARING A NEW BUDGET AND IN DESIGNING A STRATEGY TO WIN TUC AGREEMENT ON A THIRD YEAR'S PAY POLICY. ALTHOUGH HIS ABLE DEPUTY, JOEL BARNETT, COULD NO DOUBT HANDLE THE BUDGET EXERCISE WITH SKILL, WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS THE MAN TO LEAD THE CRUCIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNIONS. NOR IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEE ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT -- SAVE POSSIBLY CALLAGHAN HIMSELF -- WHO WOULD BE AS EFFECTIVE AS HEALEY IN THAT ROLE. (LEADER OF THE HOUSE MICHAEL FOOT, CERTAIN TO BE AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT'S WAGE POLICY NEGOTIATING TEAM, LACKS THE GRASP OF DETAIL AND PRESENCE TO LEAD THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE ALSO HAS EXTREMELY HEAVY DEMANDS ON HIS TIME BECAUSE OF HIS RESPONSIBILITIES IN PARLIAMENT.)

4. THE MEDIA HAVE MENTIONED SEVERAL OTHER POSSIBLE REPLACEMENTS FOR CROSLAND -- EDUCATION SECRETARY WILLIAMS, ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY SHORE AND HOME SECRETARY REES PROMINENT AMONG THEM. THERE IS QUESTION, HOWEVER, WHETHER ANY OF THEM HAS THE QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCE TO MOVE

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 662

INFO: RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 2089

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AUSMISSION EC BRUSSELS 5216

USMISSION NATO

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LONDON 2681

SMOOTHLY INTO CROSLAND'S OFFICE. WILLIAMS IS CLEARLY THE MOST ABLE OF THE THREE, AND COULD NO DOUBT DO THE JOB WELL. SHE HAS THE ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES OF BEING UNUSUALLY QUICK TO GRASP COMPLICATED BRIEFS AND PARTICULARLY WELL INFORMED ON EC AFFAIRS. HER STRONG AND UNEQUIVOCAL PRO-EC STANCE, HOWEVER, WOULD BE HELD AGAINST HER BY MANY IN THE LABOR PARTY, A CONSIDERATION THAT CALLAGHAN IS UNLIKELY TO IGNORE. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF LABOR PARTY POLITICS, SHORE WOULD PROBABLY BE THE BEST CANDIDATE, BUT WE (AND OTHERS) ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT HIS DEPTH AND ABILITY, AND HIS HOSTILITY TOWARD THE EC MAKES HIM

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DOUBLY SUSPECT. WE ALSO DOUBT THAT REES, WHOM WE CONTINUE TO CONSIDER ONE OF THE FINEST AND MOST DECENT MEN IN BRITISH PUBLIC LIFE, HAS THE ABILITY TO HANDLE THE JOB. BUT HE HAS ONE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ASSET: HIS CLOSENESS AND LOYALTY TO THE PM. WE DO NOT SEE ANY OTHER LIKELY SUCCESSORS AT THIS POINT, THOUGH PRICES SECRETARY ROY HATTERSLEY MIGHT WELL BE A DARK HORSE ON THE STRENGTH OF HIS RECENT EXPERIENCE AT FCO.

5. CROSLAND'S ILLNESS ALSO GIVES CALLAGHAN A POLITICAL PROBLEM -- A VACANCY IN LABOR'S THINNING PARLIAMENTARY RANKS. HIS ABSENCE FROM COMMONS WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNMENT TO COMMAND AN EFFECTIVE WORKING MAJORITY IN COMMONS. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, EXPECT THAT CROSLAND'S SEAT WILL BE VACATED VOLUNTARILY, EVEN IF HE SHOULD BE SERIOUSLY INCAPACITATED. DEATH, OF COURSE, WOULD NECESSITATE A BY-ELECTION IN CROSLAND'S NORMALLY SAFE GRIMSBY SEAT. GIVEN THE RECENT FISHERIES TROUBLES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT INDUSTRY IN GRIMSBY, LABOR COULD NOT BE CONFIDENT OF THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME. THE LOSS OF A SEAT WOULD PLACE THE GOVERNMENT IN A MINORITY POSITION, IF NOT IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER OF FALLING.

6. THESE CONSIDERATIONS WILL NO DOUBT WEIGH HEAVILY WITH CALLAGHAN AS HE COMES TO GRIPS WITH THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION. IN THE ABSENCE OF HARD INFORMATION AS TO HIS INCLINATIONS, WE OFFER THEM AS BACKGROUND FOR THE HARD DECISIONS HE WILL SOON HAVE TO MAKE.

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## Message Attributes

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22 May 2009  
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